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JUNIOR HIGH-SCHOOL LATIN; ITS PLACE IN WAR-MODIFIED EDUCATION¹

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"To be or not to be, that is the question." In this day of "vocational guidance" and the call of the "practical" (which I sometimes think is more like the "Call of the Wild"), when the pendulum is swinging from the extreme classical training of fifty years ago to the other extreme of vocational training and so-called practicality, many parents, business men, and even teachers are announcing in no uncertain terms that they are "from Missouri," and they herald abroad their incredulity with regard to all things in general and Latin in particular. It rests with the Latin teachers of the country to do the required "showing," or to dodge as gracefully as they may the swinging pendulum. And that is right. If they cannot give a reason for the faith that is in them, then is it not faith but tradition and superstition, be the subject Latin or religion. If on the other hand they show their children to be better grounded in "language sense" and equipped with a better working vocabulary and a clearer and more fundamental understanding of their own language, then they have a rightful place under the sun and are not mere cumberers of the earth.

I am a teacher of English. I believe that I am teaching English through the Latin in a better way than I can possibly teach it in any other. I hope to show in this paper that if we are really to make the most of our Latin, if we are to make it worth the time we spend on it, we must begin at the logical beginning and correlate the fundamental Latin with the English from the beginning of technical language work in the seventh grade. How many times have we heard, how many times have we ourselves said, "I really learned my English grammar from my Latin." Why wait then

¹ Read at the Classical Conference of the National Educational Association at Pittsburgh.

till high school for the key which is to open the minds of the children to a real understanding of their own and other languages? My little artist of Grade VII-1 grasped the idea in a clever cartoon: a child stands before the closed door to all languages, with the key—"Latin"—just out of reach; getting on a box which she calls "good work," however, she reaches the key! Verily, unto babes has it been revealed, though hidden from the wise and prudent! With this introduction let me tell you "how I do it."

In Grand Rapids we are teaching Latin in the seventh and eighth grades of three schools; in two of these the children who have good marks in English, and who *choose* the Latin, comprise the Latin class of Grade VII-1, beginning in September. No new class is begun in February, so the February class has no opportunity for Latin before high school. The weaker ones are weeded out at the end of the year, leaving a picked class of the best language pupils for the eighth-grade Latin. I confess that there are times when my soul longeth for one such class, just to see what I could do with it! At Sigsbee, however, we do not feel that so important a subject should be left to the discretion of children; the question is settled for them, and there is no quibbling. Beginning with Grade VII-1 every child in the regular school work, with the exception of those entering the school in Grade VIII-2, takes Latin. Children in Grades VII-2 and VIII-1 coming from other schools are "coached up" in their Latin—hard for them and not particularly easy for me, but this is accepted as one of the necessary difficulties along a new trail and is by no means unsurmountable. I have two half-hour periods each day for this work, and am always ready to give help after school hours. It is not easy work. There are children with no "language sense," just as there are those who cannot grasp mathematics, but without exception I have found that the child who proclaims that his poor language work is due entirely to the difficulty of Latin is equally dense in straight English and often looks back with longing to the kindly "endings" which helped him to locate the elusive objects, subjective complements, adjectives, and the active and passive verbs. But the main difficulty, in my experience, is not in the child, or the subject, or the lack of trained teachers, but the utter lack, up to this time,

of a suitable textbook. Good high-school texts for beginners are few and far between, but for seventh- and eighth-grade Latin, where the English and Latin should be correlated in every lesson, they simply do not exist. (For that matter, how many English grammars and "principal-supervisor-normal-trainer arranged" courses of study are not better fitted for the comprehension of a college postgraduate than that of the children upon whom they are inflicted?)

"You are too big a man, Mr. King," said one of his friends to my Greek teacher at college, "to stay here in this little town teaching Greek."

"Bless your heart, man," came the answer, "I'm not teaching Greek alone; I'm teaching boys and girls!"

In that spirit I have undertaken my "Latin in the grades," and because I could find no text written by a *teacher of children* and therefore adapted to *children*, I chose one which I could use as a background, and with that in their hands I have supplemented and fixed over and contrived, in order to give my children an understandable Latin foundation for the English required in the grades; and I have also made it possible for the child of average intelligence to survive that fatal first year of high-school Latin. (Parenthetically, I want to ask why so much more is crowded into that same first year than the average child can assimilate? Is it fair to the Latin to require so much that only the brightest of the class can get through creditably, while some schools boast of the "high standard" which causes from 30 to 50 per cent of the class to fail? With grade preparation it is quite within reason; without it the mortality in ninth-grade Latin is unavoidable.)

A child's power of concentration on one subject is limited, and I plan, therefore, as much variety as possible. In Grade VII-1 I cover:

1. Pronunciation (taught at first from familiar quotations, counting, Pater-noster, etc.—rules later)
2. The simple sentence
 - a) Parts of speech
 - b) Analysis—subject, predicate, object, subjective complement, indirect object, phrase, adjective, genitive and adverb modifiers, vocative
3. The first-declension noun

4. The verb in *-t* and *-nt*
5. The agreement of adjectives
6. The beginning of the second declension

(The grouping of my outlines is very differently arranged in actual teaching, the reviews doing the logical summing up of the separate topics as I present them in this paper.)

In this grade the analysis is of very simple sentences, both English and Latin, and many sentences are given in illustration, with frequent reviews to "clinch" the various constructions. Remember, it must be over and over with a child—"seventy times seven," and then many times—if the principles of analysis and declension are to be thoroughly grounded. Here I am hindered by the time it takes to copy from the blackboard, or to make mimeograph copies of, all these exercises, but it is the best I can do with the material in hand.

It has been most interesting to see how case and verb endings help the child's reasoning powers; to note the real thinking which decides whether an *-ae* ending is genitive or dative singular, or nominative or vocative plural; to be sure of the subject necessary for a verb in *-t* or *-nt*; to make the choice of words in a translation. A child who can hold his own against fellow-pupil, teacher, or superintendent even, in a fine grammatical distinction has gained something worth while for his whole life, and I encourage individuality and argument in every possible way.

Beginning with Grade VII-2 the English grammar is used for reference and illustration. All through my supplementary work I am careful to introduce no construction that has not been thoroughly presented with rules and explanations, a practice which is not generally followed in English grammars, so that care must be used in the selection of illustrative English sentences. The class in Grade VII-2 follows this outline:

1. The second declension complete
2. Declension of adjectives
3. Sentences
 - a) Simple, compound, complex
 - b) Declarative, interrogative, imperative, exclamatory
4. The verb
 - a) Present tense—*sum* and first- and second-conjugation verbs
 - b) Transitive active, intransitive, copulative

5. Nouns—appositive, dative modifiers
6. Pronouns—personal, possessive adjective, *is*, *ea*, *id*.
7. Adjectives—kinds, comparison (in English), nine irregular adjectives
8. Adverbs
9. Parsing—nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs

Along with all this detail of technical rules, declensions, and parsings are all sorts of memory exercises, sentences, stories, and dialogues to keep up the interest. The work is confined to the simple sentence in Grade VII-1, thus establishing "sentence sense." In VII-2 easy compound and complex sentences are introduced, and a continual drill on vocabulary and derivations, as well as on rules and declensions, is kept up. My children are taught that half of their Latin depends on vocabulary and declensions, a fourth on rules, and the remaining fourth on plain common sense; and that whatever is true of the Latin (except in the matter of idioms) is also true of English.

In Grade VIII-1 the outline is as follows:

1. The verb
 - a) *Sum*, and the active voice of all the conjugations in the simple tenses
 - b) Parsing
2. Noun constructions
 - a) Ablative—cause, manner, means
 - b) Dative—with special verbs
 - c) Accusative—adverbial, exclamation
3. Connected stories, supplementary reading, dramatization, etc.

The reviews are thorough and frequent. Translations become more complicated, though not enough so as to be beyond children of this grade. Such supplementary books as *Decem fabulae*, *Primus annus*, and some others are introduced, though it is difficult to find much in print that does not include too many third-declension nouns to be used as more than sight reading.

Grade VIII-2 takes up:

1. The verb—passive voice, perfect tense, imperative, infinitive, participle (present participle in English only)
2. Pronouns—relative, interrogative, demonstrative (*hic*, *ille*, *iste*), emphatic (*ipse*)
3. Third-, fourth-, and fifth-declension nouns and third-declension adjectives, very briefly

This sounds very "Latiny," and it is, but remember that at every step the English is correlated with it, the similarities and differences are discussed, and the idioms in both languages are compared. I do not believe that anything is to be gained for either Latin or English by teaching, for example, the Latin pronoun-adjective *is, ea, id* for one half of the class period and the English infinitive for the other. If we are to make this thing work to any good end, *is, ea, id* calls for a discussion of the English *this, that, these, those*, with a glance in passing at such colloquialisms as "those kind of people" and "if anyone wishes *they* may"; the interrogative pronoun *quis, quid* calls for our own *who, what*, and a word concerning the common mistake "*who* did you see?" In the same way the conjugation and synopsis of the Latin verbs teach the same thing in English, with the necessary agreement of verb and subject. Correlate, correlate, correlate!

I am not always able to carry out the same outline with every class, and I am always hindered by the fact that no Latin text does so correlate with the English that the grade requirements in English can be met without much readjustment and rearrangement, but too much time must not be taken for copying rules and exercises, and I am therefore forced to sacrifice more or less of my outline—according to the mentality of the class—and use what I can from text and copies, simply because I have yet nothing better to put in the hands of my children. I have never yet seen a beginner's Latin book that did not need ten Latin sentences for every one that it has, if it is to be used in the grades. Little children learn to talk by talking, to read by reading, whether in Latin or in English, not by philosophizing about it; and a successful text for grade Latin must recognize this principle by its abundance of Latin reading.

I introduce the third, fourth, and fifth declensions, if at all, very briefly, and then merely to give my classes an insight into the different endings they may expect to find later on; therefore the exercises and stories must use only first- and second-declension nouns, with the exception of a very few others like *pater, mater, frater, soror*, etc., which the children can easily guess from their English derivatives and the quotations which they have been

regularly learning. I do not touch the subjunctive at all, and there are no constructions requiring it.

I am not at all convinced that parsing is worth the time it takes, but that, with a short survey of diagraming in Grade VIII-2, is one of the things I concede to the high-school teachers of English: I do not waste much time on frills like the slants, braces, standards, and broken lines of a diagram, but analysis is absolutely essential. The other day I asked a little girl of Grade VII-2 if she could analyze all the sentences she had been translating in an after-school "made-up" lesson after an absence. "Of course I can," she answered, "that's the way I translate." My children learn that analysis is the proof of a translation, whether from the Latin-English or the dreaded and nerve-wrecking English-Latin exercises (and of their own spoken English as well), and they often wonder why their high-school Latin teachers never ask them to analyze their difficult Latin sentences. I wonder, too, though this is the first time I have ever ventured to say so in public.

Each teacher will find her own ways of keeping the subject new and interesting. Vocabulary drills may become a progressive vocabulary party with "vocabulary slips" as cards; parsing or analysis may be a contest—boys v. girls, or one side at the board, the other at the seats checking mistakes; translations may be written out in preparation and compared in class; original cartoons, newspaper headlines using Latin quotations (which we often need to correct!), Latin sayings in our stories and on our coins, abbreviations such as i.e., e.g., v., A.M., P.M., A.D., etc., all these, if noticed, keep the interest high. My own classes have enjoyed the cartoons and quotations especially. Charts of verb and case endings hanging in plain sight, except on test days, are a great help, and I have a stamping outfit for these. Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, the Introduction to the Declaration of Independence and to the Constitution of the United States, with words of Latin derivation underscored in red, emphasize the fact that Latin is a live language not a dead one.

The amount of Latin covered varies with the ability of the class. With a picked class, or with a good grade textbook, the first semester of high-school Latin and much more than the usual

grade English could easily be covered. As it is, with Latin required of all and depending on notebooks for the necessary supplementary work, I do not urge my children to enter Latin in Grade IX-2 when they enter high school, unless they are exceptionally good students. Remember, they have done the regular grade work in English *plus* the declensions, conjugations, vocabulary, and idioms of a great deal of Latin. The Freshmen have enough that is new and difficult and will be thankful for the grade preparation which enables them to "bring their souls alive" through the first year of high-school Latin instead of fainting by the way. And it is not the Latin *per se* that we are working for in the grades, but a foundation for our English, and incidentally for the other most important modern languages of today as well.

A few things are needed among ourselves: First, the National Education Association Committee on Nomenclature reported several years ago. In how many cities have the language teachers come together on that report and agreed upon the vocabulary which shall be used, at least in their own city, regardless of individual hobbies or likings? Do any of us live in such a city? I wish I might hear that the good work has been begun somewhere. It might spread! I don't care whether a child from another school names a construction subjective complement, attribute complement, predicate nominative, predicate noun, or predicate adjective, so long as *he* knows what he is talking about: it's all one to me and should be to any teacher of language. But if his *teacher* uses a nomenclature that the child has never heard of, and that is not mentioned in his textbook, and if every successive teacher speaks a different grammatical language, is it to be wondered at if the bewildered youngster loses his head in the contemplation of the "57 varieties" and seems to have had no previous training? This is surely a great need, first, of course, for the children, but also for the teachers themselves.

Secondly, is it possible, in these times, to get a text published which shall be adapted to grade use, and which shall so correlate the English and Latin as to avoid the change of curriculum and also avoid the added burden to the already overburdened grade child which the introduction of grade Latin as a separate subject

would involve? The present lack of such a book is the one obstacle in the way of a much wider introduction of Latin into the grades. It is one thing (at least I infer that it *would* be) to teach Latin from a carefully graded book which meets the needs of your class; quite another (and this I do not need to infer about!) to take a text meant for high-school pupils already more or less grounded in English grammar and so to supplement and rearrange it as to make it usable (I do not say adaptable) in a grade class which has no knowledge at all of technical grammar. Without a good grade book grade Latin classes are bound to be few and their success more or less uncertain.

Thirdly, in case such a text can be put on the market we must use every effort to establish English via Latin classes throughout the country by showing that they mean to our children (1) a maximum of result with a minimum of the difficulties and discouragement accompanying the regular grind of English grammar or the beginning of high-school Latin; (2) familiar Latin quotations, songs, words, and expressions assimilated as a part of their working vocabulary; (3) a wider English vocabulary and a keener sense of the possibilities of our own language; (4) the foundation laid, at the psychological time when a child learns language—his own or any other—most naturally and easily, for the study of Spanish, French, or Italian; and (5), by no means least, the preliminary Latin work in the grades which makes it possible to avoid the usual distressing mortality in the ninth-grade Latin classes.

Proving this, we establish our right to exist as Latin teachers and to urge that Latin should not only *not* be dropped from our high-school courses but, properly correlated with the English, should become a requirement of the seventh and eighth grades.